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Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization on the promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection, submitted in accordance with Assembly resolution 71/240.

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Report of the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization on the promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection

I. Introduction

1. The Secretary-General was requested to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, in collaboration with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and other relevant United Nations agencies and programmes, a report on the implementation of resolution 71/240, entitled "Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection", including recommendations on ways and means to promote sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, as a tool for fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development. As the specialized agency of the United Nations system vested with a central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, UNWTO was, in turn, requested to take the lead in the preparation of the present report.

2. The advances described in the present report reflect the results from a survey conducted in 2018 among all Member States on the review of national approaches to the implementation of resolution 71/240, as well as the knowledge gained by UNWTO through its active engagement in events, initiatives, research and other activities with its member States and affiliate members and other relevant stakeholders.

II. Developments since the adoption of resolution 71/240

A. Advances in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

3. By including three targets specifically related to the tourism sector in the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda recognizes the important role tourism can play in advancing sustainable development and accelerating progress across all 17 Goals.

4. To promote the sector's important role as a catalyst for positive change and as an instrument for achieving the Goals and fostering advances in all three dimensions of sustainability, the General Assembly, in its resolution 70/193, proclaimed 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. The International Year was designated 50 years after the celebration of the International Tourist Year in 1967, under the slogan "Tourism — Passport to Peace", and 15 years after the International Year of Ecotourism was commemorated in 2002. The specific aim of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development was to raise awareness of tourism's contribution to sustainable development among both decision makers and the general public, while mobilizing all stakeholders to work together to make tourism a catalyst for positive change.

5. The International Year provided a unique opportunity to recognize the important role of well-managed tourism as an instrument, inter alia, for sustainable development, economic diversification, eradicating poverty, protecting the environment, preserving cultural heritage and strengthening peace in the world. To ensure continuity of the initiatives and actions initiated in 2017, various other activities are being implemented, such as the online platform "Tourism for SDGs —

journey to 2030". The platform, developed with the support of Switzerland, was launched jointly with UNWTO on the sidelines of the Economic and Social Council high-level political forum on sustainable development as a new tool aimed at advancing the contributions of tourism to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.[1]

B. Accelerating the shift towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns in the tourism sector

6. With the goal of further driving the shift towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns, the Sustainable Tourism Programme of the One Planet network (formerly, the 10-Year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns) has continued its cooperative efforts to connect actors from all around the world to advance the development of tourism that is more sustainable and to scale up initiatives and partnerships to accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production.

7. The portfolio of work of the Sustainable Tourism Programme includes all initiatives carried out by more than 90 partners and over 390 activities implemented in 2015, 2016 and 2017, resulting in a programme portfolio value of over $25 million. Since 2017, the programme has continued to focus on its four thematic priorities: integrating sustainable consumption and production into policies; generating evidence on sustainable consumption and production; mainstreaming sustainable consumption and production practices; and enhancing the financing of sustainable consumption and production. On the basis its core activities, the Sustainable Tourism Programme continues to generate added value for its members through:

(a) Advocacy materials that raise the visibility of the efforts of network members, such as the 2017 calendar of events featuring the celebrations of network members during the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development through various social media platforms;

(b) Knowledge-sharing opportunities through the participation of members in public forums such as the World Circular Economy Forum (Helsinki, June 2017), the World Conservation Congress of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (Honolulu, United States of America, September 2016) and the International Tourism Trade Fair (Madrid, January 2015), as well as through the organization and implementation of webinars to disseminate experiences and expertise with interested participants;

(c) Technical support for the implementation of projects and the organization of events, such as the forums on sustainable and responsible tourism held in Croatia and the Republic of Korea in June 2017, the workshop on sustainable development and the circular economy, held in French Polynesia in November 2017 and the three tourism projects supported by the trust fund for the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns.

8. Since 2016, the Sustainable Tourism Programme has organized, in conjunction with a number of partners worldwide, a variety of events to advance discussions on the core subjects of the Programme. One of the important milestones achieved in 2017 was the third International Symposium and Annual Conference of the Sustainable Tourism Programme of the 10-Year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, hosted by the Botswana Tourism Organization

[1] Further details on the activities and impacts of the International Year can be consulted in the report of the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization on the implementation of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017 (A/73/280).

in Kasane, Botswana, in December 2017. The event focused on empowering the sustainability of tourism destinations through innovation and allowed participants to exchange experiences and knowledge of innovative approaches to enhance tourism and conservation planning, financing and marketing. It also served to promote the development and adoption of the "Kasane call to action on Sustainable consumption and production in Tourism: the tourism we want", which had been prepared as the network's contribution to the legacy of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

9. Webinars organized by the Sustainable Tourism Programme, in cooperation with other entities, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Government of France, have become an important tool for sharing experiences with interested stakeholders from within and outside the network. Since 2016, a total of 13 webinars have been organized with more than 800 participants from all around the world. Topics covered have included climate change, small- and medium-sized enterprises, tourism planning, the circular economy, sustainability catalysts, financing sustainable development, "overtourism" in protected areas and sustainable food management. To enable further global dissemination, all the webinars have been made available online by the Programme.

10. A key approach to addressing the challenge of decoupling growth from resource use is to shift away from linear to circular consumption and production patterns, promoting closed material loops along the entire value chain. Circularity is increasingly the focus of One Planet network webinars, conferences and research initiatives. The network has provided, for example, technical support for and input to a seminar on sustainable and responsible tourism, hosted by the local government of French Polynesia in Papeete on 20 and 21 November 2017, as the second in a series of three seminars held under the framework of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council project on sustainable development and the circular economy.

11. In order to build on these efforts and further advance thinking on the circular economy within tourism, during the high-level political forum on sustainable development held in in New York from 9 to 18 July, the sustainable buildings and construction programme of the One Planet network, together with UNEP and the Governments of Bhutan, Botswana, Finland and Mexico, held a side event to showcase how circular economy solutions in the tourism and construction sectors could accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 12, while also contributing to sustainable and resilient societies.

C. Establishing appropriate national policies, guidelines and institutions

12. Supporting stakeholders in creating and implementing relevant policy frameworks that foster sustainable development remains a key responsibility of the tourism sector. To support national Governments with the task, UNWTO, in collaboration with UNEP and supported by the Government of France, carried out research between April 2016 and June 2018 on the integration of sustainable consumption and production into national tourism policies so as to gain insights into the current status quo around the world and to inspire further action from tourism stakeholders to accelerate sustainable consumption and production. The summary of the resulting baseline report on the integration of sustainable consumption and production patterns into tourism policies was presented at the high-level political forum in July 2018. The full report is forthcoming.

13. The methodology for the research was based on the indicators of success of the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, which provide a breakdown of the concept of sustainable consumption and production into tangible elements or "impact areas", such as the protection of biodiversity, sustainable land use, energy efficiency, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, water use efficiency and waste reduction. It included a global survey on tourism planning, which garnered 75 responses, a systematic review of 73 national tourism polices, interviews with 11 experts from national tourism authorities, consultations with key stakeholders and an assessment of connected datasets and policy documents, including the implementation plans of the three Rio Conventions (Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). In total, the project covered 101 States (64 per cent of all UNWTO member States) from all regions of the world.

14. According to the findings in the report, national tourism policies present a good starting point for sustainable consumption and production to become an essential element of long-term planning for tourism development. Also highlighted in the is the need to take urgent action to decouple tourism's growth from the use of natural resources. The findings are broken down into six main areas: the evolution of national institutional structures for tourism; common elements of national tourism planning; overall commitment of national tourism policies to sustainable consumption and production and sustainable development; the existence of policy instruments addressing environmental challenges of the tourism sector; implementation of national tourism policies and the monitoring of progress; and other connections between national tourism policies and the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 12.

15. Five recommended strategic approaches for policymakers are provided in the report, with the aim of accelerating the integration of sustainable consumption and production into national tourism policies and its implementation on the ground. These include using the Sustainable Development Goals as a compass and prioritizing Goal 12; paving the way towards implementation by outlining sustainable consumption and production policy instruments; prioritizing measurement and monitoring and making data available; incorporating spatial data to visualize the interactions with the environment; and embracing innovative approaches, particularly circularity. Ultimately, the report's findings area aimed at supporting tourism stakeholders in their endeavours to advance the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 12, through responsible planning and policymaking.

D. Findings of the World Tourism Organization implementation survey on resolution 71/240

16. In early 2018, UNWTO conducted its survey on the implementation of resolution 71/240, and collected input from all Member States and other international organizations on the development and advances made with regard to the areas covered in the resolution. The answers provided by the 19 respondents to the concept note gave insights into a variety of efforts related to mainstreaming biodiversity, climate change, poverty eradication and inclusive development that have been implemented in different countries since 2016. Overall, responses to the survey indicated that Sustainable Development Goal 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere) and Goal 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), closely followed by Goal 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) are currently considered especially relevant for the sustainable development of tourism.

Mainstreaming biodiversity and general considerations

17. Unique cultural and natural assets, such as pristine beaches, coral reefs and biodiversity, provide economic and financial value to sustainable tourism and vice versa. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and partners are supporting field surveys to estimate the full socioeconomic benefits of protected areas and related tourism activities. The South Luangwa National Park in Zambia, for example, generated 1,821 direct jobs, $14.8 million in value added, $2.9 million from park fees and $2.6 million and $3.6 million from business taxes in 2016. Protected areas in Brazil have triggered more than $347 million in direct sales and $194 million in value added to gross domestic product and have supported 23,813 jobs.

18. UNDP works in partnership with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to nurture economic and financial opportunities and reduce harmful impacts of tourism operations. In Guatemala, UNDP and GEF partnered to maximize the value of the "prayer for rain" ancestral celebration, which attracts thousands of visitors, without harming the area that contains Chicabal Volcano and Chicabal Lake and benefiting local communities. Results included a 95 per cent reduction in solid waste and the introduction of a new entrance fee system to support conservation.

19. Additional opportunities for sustainable tourism ventures include the project on strengthening marine protected areas to conserve marine key biodiversity areas, which has prompted the appraisal of ecotourism opportunities in 15 marine protected areas and opportunity assessments conducted in 12 Tanzanian reserves, which have led to a 25-fold increase in the number of visitors in certain areas thanks to recommendations and additional investments. Even in conflict-prone contexts, sustainable tourism can support the survival of cultural and natural assets, such as in the surroundings of the crystal-clear lakes of Band-e-Amir in Afghanistan, which attract nearly 200,000 visitors per year. Further efforts should lead to replicating and adapting initiatives coming from local and indigenous communities, such as the Raja Ampat Homestay Association, which is an Equator Prize winner and network of over 80 community-owned ecotourism businesses operating in Papua and West Papua.

20. Member States have mainstreamed biodiversity in the tourism sector by strengthening planning initiatives for the public use of protected areas, such as in the case of Uruguay, where such a project was developed within the framework of an agreement between the Ministry of Housing, Territorial Planning and Environment and the Ministry of Tourism and Sport, with the participation of the national agency for research and innovation and technical support from the non-governmental organization Retos al Sur.

21. The use of voluntary instruments, such as certification, which address the protection of biodiversity was emphasized in Uruguay as a valuable tool for recognizing good practices in the accommodation sector. Environmental management and climate change action are also relevant to the sector, including an emphasis on energy efficiency, sustainable water use, sustainable waste management facilities and adapting to climate change.

22. El Salvador is seeking to incorporate biodiversity into tourism activities at the national level, through strategies such as "living villages" and through projects on biodiversity, fisheries and tourism. Some of the barriers to implementing the strategies, however, include a lack of coordination between public and private actors, poor return on investment in the short term and the persistence of practices that adversely affect the environment.

23. In its 2013–2018 national development plan, Mexico acknowledges the importance of tourism for job creation, developing markets for small and medium-

sized enterprises and protecting the natural and cultural richness of the country. Objective 5 of the tourism sectoral plan 2013–2018 is aimed at guiding the sector towards promoting the sustainable development of tourism destinations and increasing the social and economic benefits of the recipient communities.

24. In the Dominican Republic, the issue of biodiversity with regard to tourism is regulated by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, in particular its Coastal and Marine Affairs subdivision. According to the plan, the development of tourism must comply with environmental requirements, at both the construction and operational phases of project, including with regard to hotels and other sector-related facilities.

25. The National Council of Protected Areas of Guatemala, responsible for the management of protected areas and biodiversity, has strengthened the capacity of its personnel through training on such issues as conservation, tourism and planning. The key driver of the master plan for sustainable tourism 2015–2025 is to develop tourism according to global sustainable tourism criteria. Some of the barriers encountered include a lack of financial resources for the full implementation of plans and projects and a lack of awareness on sustainability and on the need to support the undertakings.

26. Panama has mainstreamed biodiversity through initiatives promoted by the Ministry of Environment. One of its five strategic lines of action is the development of green tourism in protected areas, aimed at promoting biodiversity conservation through the development of low-impact ecotourism with local communities and the private sector. The efforts are carried out jointly with the Panama Tourism Authority the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, the Natura Foundation, the Inter-American Development Bank and GEF. Other ecotourism activities aimed at safeguarding biodiversity include promoting ecotourism as a tool for conservation and science; participatory monitoring of the harpy eagle in the Chagres National Park and of the jaguar in Darien National Park and Portobelo National Park; developing plans for the public use of protected areas; and developing standards for sustainable tourism and the involvement of local communities.

27. The Panamanian environmental agenda 2014–2019 emphasizes the co-management of protected areas with organized community groups for protected areas — both marine and terrestrial — and strengthened management and active conservation of protected areas through environmental education and investment programmes, environmental community business, low-impact ecotourism, volunteer work and other activities and the institutionalization of the concept and management of biological corridors. Some obstacles identified by Panama for mainstreaming biodiversity include building effective coordination mechanisms for public, private and local communities, addressing land-use conflicts in protected areas and building credibility in processes towards working with local communities.

28. By Executive Decree No. 59 of 9 March 2016, Panama established a mechanism for the shared management of areas belonging to the national system of protected areas in Panama, administered by the Ministry of Environment, for the conservation of biodiversity. Through its national biodiversity strategy and action plan, Panama recognizes the need to integrate other sectors beyond the environmental sector for the conservation of biological diversity. Concessions, permits and other tools are among the instruments that have been widely used to achieve these purposes.

29. The environmental policy of the tourism sector of Peru establishes guidelines for the implementation of measures that contribute to the control and prevention of environmental pollution and the conservation of biodiversity. In the policy, Peru recognize the need for a comprehensive vision for the sustainable use of natural resources to ensure the sustainability of biodiversity.

30. The Seychelles sustainable tourism label contributes to biodiversity and environmental conservation in the country. The need to protect biodiversity is also mainstreamed through environmental impact assessments. Furthermore, the national biodiversity strategy and action plan of Seychelles takes into account different sectors including tourism.

31. Trinidad and Tobago has identified ecotourism as an area that will support development in the country. As a result, a draft ecotourism policy has been developed and is being refined. Furthermore, some of the more successful ecotourism organizations in the country, such as Nature Seekers and Save Our Sea Turtles, have taken the lead in the development of biodiversity-related projects focusing on conservation efforts for endangered sea turtles and on initiatives that protect and preserve local ecosystems.

32. Some of the success factors identified by Trinidad and Tobago for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in the tourism sector include the determination of some communities to preserve, conserve and protect the environment, recognizing its impact on their ability to benefit economically, socioculturally and environmentally; the creation of subcommittees engaged in protecting and preserving biodiversity; and training and capacity-building in communities.

33. Sustainable tourism is at the heart of the 2017–2021 national tourism development plan of Costa Rica, including different sustainability standards for the tourism sector.

34. The 2014 Venezuelan law on fostering sustainable tourism as a community-based and rural activity is aimed promoting and developing sustainable and responsible tourism as a community and social activity, with full respect for the environment and biodiversity. Tourism development of low environmental impact is encouraged and rewarded in order to preserve hydrographical resources, energy, forestry, biodiversity, protected areas, flora, wildlife and any other environmental category or area as determined by law.

35. Bhutan has begun to align and integrate tourism plans and programmes with biodiversity plans and programmes to ensure that they are complementary. Meanwhile, Turkey reports numerous laws, regulations, and strategies that relate to biodiversity. Sudan is implementing its national policies on biodiversity through its Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources.

36. Biodiversity is considered an asset of Slovenian tourism, especially ecotourism. The Nature Conservation Act is strictly enforced. Actions that might have a negative impact on natural resources or biodiversity are prohibited, and an environmental impact assessment is a prerequisite for any activity in the natural environment.

37. In December 2014, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism launched its "Biodiversity Strategy Austria 2020+", according to which Austria sets goals and measurements to preserve the country's biological diversity. Under target 5 of the strategy, tourism and leisure activities are addressed specifically in line with biodiversity activities. It is considered essential that tourism and leisure activities be controlled, paying particular attention to ecologically sensitive areas. In addition, the guidelines on environmental labels for the tourism and leisure industries include biodiversity criteria.

38. The UNWTO/Chimelong Initiative on Wildlife and Sustainable Tourism was established thanks to a contribution from the Chimelong Group, based in Guandong, China). Through the initiative, training seminars were held in 2017 and 2018 for tourism officials on tourism and biodiversity conservation in Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Guinea and the Niger, and on wildlife and sustainable

tourism in Bangladesh. Regional seminars were also held in Botswana and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on media relations for wildlife and sustainable tourism, in which media officers from several African countries participated. In 2018, UNWTO organized a regional seminar on climate change, biodiversity and sustainable tourism development in Fiji and has launched projects on sustainable tourism and wildlife conservation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zimbabwe.

Climate Change

39. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States recognized the scale and opportunity of the links between climate change and sustainable development. Sustainable Development Goal 13 is dedicated to addressing the need to take urgent action on the issue of climate change, which is seen as being of cross-cutting relevance to ensure the successful implementation of all 17 Goals.

40. According to approximately 40 per cent of nationally determined contributions, tourism is acknowledged either as a country priority, as part of mitigation and adaptation strategies, or as a sector vulnerable to climate change. At the international level, tourism also provides opportunities for increased acceleration of climate action. Nevertheless, as was concluded during the discussions held at the 2016 International Symposium of the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns on the occasion of the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Marrakech, Morocco, the lack of a sectoral perspective does not allow for links to be created between the contribution of the tourism sector to the nationally determined contributions and the efforts being undertaken by tourism stakeholders operating internationally.

41. In order to promote evidence-based decision-making and to fill the knowledge gap in the relationship between climate change and tourism, UNWTO and the International Transport Forum are currently engaged in research on the global level of carbon dioxide emissions produced by the tourism sector, which will serve to update previous estimates and provide actionable policy recommendations for the sector.

42. The Austrian Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism and the Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology have jointly launched a new climate and energy strategy, "Mission 2030", in which the shift to low-emission mobility is directly addressed. The tourism sector is also mentioned with regard to digitalization for new mobility services. Electro-mobility (or e-mobility) is fostered under the strategy and "tourism mobility days" are organized regularly, as in 2017, under the Austrian Presidency of the Alpine Convention and under the umbrella of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

43. Zambia is also looking at tourism in the context of its existing climate change strategy, while Sudan has a draft plan on the issue, to be finalized in 2019. Guatemala has national regulatory policies on climate change.

44. A shift in modes of transportation is being considered in Bhutan, which is advancing its efforts towards the introduction of electric vehicles, while Seychelles is transforming its energy sector and has a road map for renewable energy that specifies links to the tourism sector, including regarding e-mobility). Poland has seen improvements regarding e-mobility.

45. The Vision 2030 national development strategy of Trinidad and Tobago (2016–2030) serves to address climate change issues. Reference is made in the strategy to the transportation sector and the goals of reducing its carbon footprint through

reductions in fossil-fuel use and improved energy efficiency and of increasing the use of clean and renewable energy technologies.

46. Uruguay has a national climate change policy that addresses various dimensions, including governance. In addition, in 2018, Uruguay launched the first electrical pathway of Latin America, in the La Plata area along the Atlantic coast of the country, where the majority of the country's beach destinations are located. The Uruguayan coastal zone receives more than 70 per cent of visitors, and almost 80 per cent of residents live there. Some 95 per cent of foreign currency income from tourism and 86 per cent of tourism expenditure by residents are concentrated in that area of the country, according to data from 2015.

47. The national climate change strategy of Mexico provides guidance on actions to be taken on the issue over the next 40 years. A long-term course of action is outlined in the strategy to improve the health and quality of life of the population, as well as for turning Mexico into a society with greater resilience. The strategy is the result of joint participation by citizens, businesses and academics with the Government of Mexico. Consideration is given to the tourism sector within the strategy, and lines of action for transportation in general are outlined, not just for tourism.

48. The climate change strategy of the Dominican Republic includes, in general terms, air and land transportation. Regarding the tourism sector in particular, measures for good practice related to energy efficiency, the rational use of water and the disposal of solid waste are being implemented.

49. Panama is considering the climate change effects of modes of transport and is working towards obtaining financing from the Green Climate Fund to develop projects that would serve as components of its integrated transport system, referred to within the national comprehensive plan for sustainable urban mobility.

50. As 60 per cent of international arrivals in Peru are by air, operational and technological improvements that are consistent with the country's climate change strategy include a shift to the use of alternative fuels and market-based measures. Such changes are important, given the positioning of the aviation sector as the main mode of transport.

Poverty eradication and inclusive development, including for the empowerment of women, youth and people with disabilities and involvement of indigenous and local communities

51. The World Customs Organization has deployed many initiatives dedicated to facilitating the cross-border movements of goods and people to improve economic competitiveness and eradicate poverty, while taking into account the need to protect societies from the undesirable effects of cross-border movements.

52. As part of the measures taken to ensure the empowerment of women and participation of indigenous and local communities and the incorporation of their knowledge, culture, heritage and values into sustainable tourism, Uruguay has established a "tourist village award". The award serves to recognize the value added by local communities to the culture of the destination and the promotion of sustainable tourism (through improving employment, recovering pride and local knowledge and caring for natural and local resources), in villages of under 5,000 inhabitants.

53. Furthermore, the UNDP Gender Equality Seal, which has been implemented in Uruguay, provides recognition, after a pioneer certification process, of efforts to identify and address gender gaps within individual organizations. Women-led initiatives are also being promoted in the country, and the Gender Commission of the Ministry of Tourism of Uruguay has undertaken an "at all costs" programme for

contracting local artists for public events, which gives a greater weight to female artists.

54. In El Salvador, indigenous communities have been included in the development of ecotourism projects, experience-sharing and the development of tourist products. In addition, specific studies for the empowerment of women in tourism activities have been conducted.

55. Guatemala has in place various mechanisms for the participation of women, including its national policy for the promotion and integral development of women. Furthermore, institutions including the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and Ministry of Culture and Sports include within their training programmes oriented to the empowerment of women in their local contexts, for the Mayan, Garifuna, and Xinca peoples.

56. The Ministry of Environment of Panama has so far supported the establishment of four co-management agreements intended to benefit directly the most impoverished populations. In addition, it has fostered alliances with the national Authority for Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises to train women artisans as part of an entrepreneurship programme. Also, within its strategy for the strengthening of tourist destinations, it coordinated with entities such as the Authority and the National Directorate of Crafts to strengthen the role of craftspeople and women's participation.

57. To enhance women's participation in the production and marketing of handicrafts and in community-based tourism initiatives, the Peruvian programme "Turismo Emprende" gave preference to proposals that served to promote the empowerment of women, cultural heritage and environmental sustainability. Within the framework of social tourism intervention actions, access by and participation of single mothers and young women is facilitated in the tourism sector so that they can directly benefit from these activities. The national community-based rural tourism strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism of Peru promotes the development of quality tourism in the communities of all three regions of Peru (coast, mountain zone and rainforest). Working with communities, empowering women and recovering traditional knowledge are, therefore, essential components for the effective implementation of the strategy.

58. The national tourism policy 2010 of Trinidad and Tobago addresses the participation of women, indigenous and local communities. Currently, the Ministry of Tourism is in the process of finalizing subpolicies relating to these groups, including in the areas of ecotourism and community-based tourism. Through the policies, the country will set out the objectives, and a draft implementation plan will identify the actions and activities that will be undertaken to ensure their achievement.

59. A micro finance scheme has been established in Sudan for such groups, while Uruguay has a small grants fund earmarked for civil society initiatives. Poland has introduced the Employment of People with Disabilities Act and the Dominican Republic has also incorporated issues related to inclusive development for all groups at the public policy level.

60. Ensuring the continuity of intangible cultural practices is an important feature of the Bhutan homestay development initiative, including with regard to creating authentic traditional lifestyles. It is also important in the Slovenian tourism sector, which promotes the uniqueness of its local heritage and local values, thus necessitating the involvement of local communities.

61. El Salvador has implemented the cross-cutting strategy "living villages", which promotes local development and provides opportunities for women, youth and indigenous peoples. In addition, through the Salvadoran Institute of Tourism, work is

being undertaken with regard to the accessibility of national recreational parks. Furthermore, the draft law on tourism presented to the Legislative Assembly is currently being discussed and includes a chapter on accessible tourism.

62. The Mexican Gender Equality Unit, created in 2014, has as one of its guiding principles the empowerment of women and the strengthening of institutional culture. As a result, In 2017, Mexico advanced work on strategic guidelines established in previous years and implemented new ones that have strengthened the practice of gender equality in public policies and processes and by actors and users in the tourism and travel sector in Mexico.

63. Through its "Impulsa" programme, the Guatemalan Tourism Institute promotes entrepreneurship opportunities for women in tourism. The Institute also coordinates with the private sector to support a project on creating economic opportunities, which is supported by international cooperation and fosters opportunities to generate employment for young women and men in various activities, including in the area of tourism.

64. Work is being undertaken in Panama on the "tourism for all" programme, in line with the Accessibility Law and the Secretariat of Persons with Disabilities. Under the programme, the Tourism Authority of Panama aims to enhance tourist destinations to avoid the migration of young people to the city and to foster training for site guides. Similarly, actions are being coordinated with the Maritime Authority of Panama and the Aquatic Resources Authority of Panama to enhance the work of fishers and boat operators. Community tourism management is also being promoted.

65. The Dominican Republic is working to facilitate equal access to employment opportunities. People with visual impairments have been hired to work, for instance, in telephone stations. Similarly, the issue of accessibility to beaches has been included in the criteria for Blue Flag certification.

66. Special mention is made of women in the Trinidad and Tobago ecotourism and community-based tourism policies and of youth in the sport tourism and community-based tourism policy. Meanwhile, the Seychelles has created a scheme entitled "My first job", which facilitates entry into the labour market for young people, either through employment or by starting businesses. Turkey has carried out a number of European Union-funded and locally funded tourism projects to address and improve the participation of disadvantaged people in tourism development.

67. In 2017, the then Austrian Ministry for Science, Research and Economy published a study on the role of women in the Austrian economy. According to the study, tourism in comparison with other industries, has a high proportion of self-employed women (48:52). On World Tourism Day, 2017, the Austrian ministry responsible for tourism organized, in cooperation with the corresponding ministries of Germany and Switzerland, a conference on tourism destinations in order to discuss how to foster sustainable tourism development and the involvement of local communities.

68. Through the Sustainable Tourism — Eliminating Poverty Initiative, and with funding from a wide range of donors, UNWTO has built up a portfolio of some 120 projects benefiting 45 countries since 2004. More recently, in 2017, UNWTO successfully completed projects under the Initiative on vocational training in tourism, targeting youth and women in Mongolia, Mozambique, Timor-Leste and Zimbabwe, as well as projects to develop and promote community-based ecotourism in Cambodia and Timor-Leste.

E. Effective measurement of tourism impacts in support of evidence-based decision-making processes

69. Improving evidence in the tourism sector for better decision-making in the three dimensions of sustainable development and for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals continues to drive the activities and initiatives implemented at the national, regional and local levels.

70. As part of the long-standing commitment of UNWTO to support the evidence-based management of tourism, the organization has continued to advance in this field. In order to advance data generation at the national level, UNWTO launched in 2016, with the support of the Statistics Division of the United Nations, the initiative entitled "Towards a statistical framework for measuring sustainable tourism". The initiative is aimed at developing an international statistical framework for measuring the role of tourism in sustainable development by linking the already existing Tourism Satellite Accounts with the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting. By linking the two economic and environmental frameworks more strategically, the initiative aims to provide a common language and organizing structure for exploiting the richness of data already available and for more effective data production, management and integration.

71. On the occasion of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017, the Government of the Philippines and UNWTO organized the sixth International Conference on Tourism Statistics, held in Manila from 21 to 24 June 2017, with the objectives of addressing how to measure sustainability and how to advance a statistical approach at the national level. In total, 1,500 participants from 88 countries participated, including ministers, chief statisticians, private sector representatives and key decision makers from international organizations.

72. In addition to its efforts to improve the measurement of tourism at the national level, UNWTO has also continued to work closely with stakeholders at the local level to improve evidence generation across the three pillars of sustainability. Because the environmental and sociocultural pillars of sustainability have long lagged behind in terms of monitoring efforts, the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories is continuing to support destinations in undertaking more holistic measurement approaches. It offers members a lively platform for sharing, discussing, improving upon and learning from experiences. Since 2016, the International Network has grown from 15 to 22 members, with three destinations currently finalizing their efforts to join the Network. Countries where observatories have been established include Brazil, China, Croatia, Greece, Indonesia, Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal and the United States of America.

73. To foster the exchange of knowledge, UNWTO has established annual global meetings of the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories, where new, already established and interested destinations as well as other interested tourism stakeholders can exchange experiences, learn about best practices and advance their monitoring efforts. The changing content of the annual meetings is linked to the advances made within the field of tourism measurement, as the sector is currently experiencing a consolidation of measurement efforts at the local level, leading to more strategically aligned and integrated approaches.

74. At the first global meeting, held in 2016, destinations to the redesigned framework of the Network were introduced, while at the second meeting, in 2017, participants were given the opportunity to discuss specific qualitative and quantitative methods to monitor tourism impacts at the local level and to learn about the newest developments with regard to non-traditional data and the opportunities deriving from new technological advances. It also afforded interested and new destinations the

opportunity to be mentored by already advanced destinations. The third global meeting is planned for October 2018, focusing on the practical steps needed when establishing and maintaining the efforts of an observatory, including interactive, practical examples of specific measurement activities.

75. Building upon the experiences of the first years, observatories continue to be established, serving as instruments for improved evidence generation at the destination level. In order to foster knowledge transfer across the different levels, countries are increasingly establishing and connecting policy frameworks and guidelines at the national level with specific measurement efforts at the local level. Indonesia, Mexico and Portugal are examples of where the objectives of national tourism development plans have been linked directly to measurement activities at the local level, using the observatories as the key instrument at the local level. These developments indicate that the support for local efforts and, therefore, the responsibility of local stakeholders for overall nationwide developments are growing — a development that is visible not only within the tourism sector but in the global discussions related to urban development as well as climate change.

76. The success of the tourism sector has also required better management and planning techniques, influencing destination governance and fostering participatory approaches. With greater numbers of tourists travelling around the world, an increasing number of destinations are confronted with new challenges in how to effectively manage both growing tourism flows and subsequent environmental and social impacts. Better informed decision-making has therefore been placed at the centre of many tourism development-related discussions so as to ensure safe and healthy living environments and the improved well-being of the local population, while also developing attractive destinations for visitors.

77. In order to achieve a balance between the different necessities, there has been a shift in destination management at the destination level, changing from quantity-driven, mainly promotional activities to management efforts that emphasize reflecting more carefully on the local context and needs. In many destinations around the world this has translated into a reduction or even termination of active marketing efforts. In exchange, efforts are increasingly focused on, among other things, better understanding the types of travellers visiting the destinations and guiding traveller flows by measuring movement patterns in real time and predicting them accordingly; creating products and services that allow for a better spread of visitors in time and space; and improving the links between visitor profiles and tourism offers.

F. Further advances in the tourism sector relevant for sustainable development

78. A key enabler for the changing tourism management patterns at the local, national and regional levels is the digitalization of the tourism sector. New technological solutions and available data allow tourism stakeholders to better address and manage the impacts of the sector. While technology allows the sector to better adapt to travellers' needs and to plan and execute ongoing operations more effectively, it has also created opportunities to better predict development scenarios, changing the nature of tourism management overall. The collection, management and usage of data have become vital for businesses and destinations as a whole, giving them the power to improve competitiveness, implement inclusive governance structures and foster sustainability.

79. To lead and shape new tourism models for the twenty-first century that are based on innovation, technology, sustainability and accessibility, the first and second UNWTO World Conferences on Smart Destinations were held in 2017 and 2018,

respectively. Organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy, Tourism and Digital Agenda of Spain and different partner destinations (the Region of Murcia in 2017 and the Principality of Asturias in 2018), the conferences gathered international tourism experts to discuss the opportunities and challenges for tourism destinations that are arising from innovative products and services based on new technological solutions. On both occasions, more than 500 participants gathered, including government representatives, private sector entities, researchers and academics and technology centres.

80. The World Conference on Smart Destinations has become an important platform for participants to share knowledge, build partnerships and advance their understanding about key topics related to smart destinations. Participants learned about and discussed topics including: geo-referenced data (location intelligence); the Internet of things and big data; the digital transformation within destinations; open data platforms and participatory approaches towards monitoring; smart destination governance; data-driven success stories; smart mobility; the new digital traveller; technology for improved accessibility of destinations; the circular economy; digital accessibility; using technology for the protection of cultural heritage and biodiversity; technology for monitoring visitor and community satisfaction; and digital innovation and new business models.

81. As a result of the growing amount of georeferenced data available, destinations are increasingly able to enhance reporting and decision-making mechanisms. Although many of the sources utilized are not new in terms of official statistics (such as satellite images), and although georeferenced data has been used for many years in various sectors, it is only through these new technological developments, (including new sources and greater, stronger and faster computing power) that geospatial data can be collected and used in new ways in all industries, including tourism.

82. New technologies and the growing capacity of destinations to monitor the effects of tourism in a more accurate and timely manner also allow tourism stakeholders to strengthen their transparent communication with all stakeholders. More open and transparent communication of tourism data is both a national- and local-level development, with one increasingly prominent method being the creation and publication of geographic information systems that provide a clear overview of specific tourism-related information.

83. To drive the digitalization of the tourism sector, a growing number of initiatives are being established to support new ideas and business models that have the potential to strengthen sustainable development. With the goal of creating jobs, generating opportunities and ensuring the sustainability and competitiveness of the sector in the future, an increasing number of private and public entities have started to establish joint or individual accelerator programmes for tourism start-ups — a trend that is still in its early stages.

84. The above-mentioned trends have been observed as a result of actively engaging with businesses and destinations around the world and have been acknowledged and discussed in a variety of different publications and conferences. With the ongoing technological advances, this development is expected to continue, offering many different opportunities for the sustainable development of the sector.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

85. **Countries have continued to see sustainable tourism development as a strategic sector when addressing a variety of issues, including poverty alleviation; the protection of biodiversity and cultural heritage; actions with**

regard to climate change; economic diversification; and the enhancement of inclusive development for all population groups, and for which policies and legislation continue to be updated or newly introduced. In this context, the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017, represented an important milestone for tourism as it facilitated the mobilization of stakeholders and awareness-raising of the sector's contribution to sustainable development. The General Assembly may wish to consider inviting Governments:

(a) To continue to strengthen efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in general, and Goals 8, 12 and 14, in particular, and, in that regard foster examples of good practices and innovative solutions within the tourism sector;

(b) To introduce measures and support initiatives aimed at promoting the employment in tourism of disadvantaged groups, including the poor, women, young people, indigenous peoples, older employees and persons with disabilities;

(c) To apply whole-of-government approaches and enhanced policy and institutional coherence, supporting funding mechanisms and initiatives for poverty alleviation projects, including initiatives from community-based organizations and small private sector entities;

86. In the light of the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-being, in which the importance of tourism for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation is emphasized and in which tourism is recognized as an enabling agent of change, the General Assembly may wish:

(a) To invite Governments, international agencies and other relevant organizations to mainstream biodiversity conservation in the tourism sector and in climate change plans and strategies, intertwining economic, social and cultural elements with climate change adaptation approaches and the preservation of relevant ecosystem services;

(b) To maintain local supply chains and encourage and support small and medium-sized enterprises in emerging destinations and with various tourism business models to work to alleviate poverty, protect the environment and promote sustainable development and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) To ensure responsible resource management, addressing the negative impacts of overtourism and respect for environmental and sociocultural capacities;

(d) To improve and expand existing sustainable tourism observatories in destinations in order to enhance the measurement, monitoring and reporting of environmental footprints and the beneficial effects of tourism operations;

(e) To promote public awareness-raising, education and training on sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism and on the positive impact that sustainable consumer choices can have;

(f) To promote the content of the Cancun Declaration at all levels and in all sectors and mobilize the necessary resources to meet its requirements.

87. The close interlinkages between tourism and social, economic and environmental issues, and the sector's ability to act as an agent of change, oblige the tourism sector to adopt sustainable consumption and production practices

that help to accelerate the global shift towards sustainability. In this regard, the General Assembly may wish:

(a) To stress the need for the integration of sustainable consumption and production patterns in the tourism sector, including through identifying and adopting tourism planning approaches aimed at improving resource efficiency;

(b) To encourage the demand for alternative models, particularly circular business models based on renewable resources, longer and diverse product life cycles, shared consumption and interconnected value chains, in order to ensure sustainability not only in the tourism sector, but for the overall sustainable development of destinations;

(c) To encourage Governments, the tourism sector and relevant organizations to join the Sustainable Tourism Programme of the One Planet network, so as to accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns in the tourism sector, and as an implementation mechanism for Sustainable Development Goal 12, with potential to advance work on the other Goals of the 2030 the Agenda, the global blueprint for sustainable development;

(d) To encourage Governments and other stakeholders to make use of the "Tourism for SDGs — journey to 2030" platform, launched by UNWTO and Switzerland (on the sidelines of the Economic and Social Council high-level political forum on sustainable development) as a new tool aimed at advancing the contributions of tourism to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

88. Through the systematic application of monitoring, evaluation and information management techniques, policymakers, planners, tourism managers and other relevant stakeholders are able to strengthen institutional capacities to support the formulation and implementation of sustainable tourism policies, strategies, plans and management processes.

89. Tourism, like other sectors, is currently experiencing a rapid digital transformation, offering new opportunities to improve sustainability based on timely evidence, making it even more relevant as a key element for the competitiveness of the sector — a trend that is expected to grow even stronger in the future. In this regard, the General Assembly may wish:

(a) To invite Governments and relevant stakeholders to welcome the many opportunities that the new digital transformation of the tourism sector offers and, therefore, to foster smart solutions that integrate knowledge from traditional and non-traditional data sources, supporting related capacity-building activities, ensuring long-term participation of local communities and the overall strengthening of a more holistic, evidence-driven approach to sustainable development in tourism;

(b) To welcome and provide support to tourism stakeholders at all levels in their efforts to acquire and utilize the expertise needed for the digital transformation of their businesses and destinations and to support efforts to enhance available data with georeferenced, spatial components (location intelligence) for more precise and timely information generation in tourism;

(c) To encourage Governments to consider the destination's specific sociocultural and environmental context and challenges when developing smart destination systems, objectives, strategies and action plans, prioritizing needs when implementing smart solutions;

(d) To urge countries and destinations to follow participatory approaches with all stakeholders, making responsible use of the possibilities that new

technological solutions offer, strengthening dialogue, transparency and ethics as key elements for sustainable and resilient destinations;

(e) To join relevant UNWTO initiatives such as the project on measuring sustainable tourism and the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories to support the worldwide practice of informed policymaking through the identification and dissemination of best practices and enhanced awareness of and capacity-building for sustainability among tourism stakeholders;

(f) To encourage Governments, international organizations and the tourism sector to continuously and proactively improve knowledge exchange and cooperation, supporting and fostering open data platforms for the sustainable development of the sector, in collaboration with other sectors;

(g) To encourage close cross-sector cooperation on smart solutions for destinations to ensure the scalability of solutions and their impacts as a means to meet the challenges laid down by the digital transformation.

(h) To invite the United Nations, specialized agencies and Governments to strengthen public-private partnerships, financing technology and innovation while investing in knowledge and human capital.